

8-5162-7

Autobiography of Mr. Counter, C.O.O.

Mr. Charles Albert Counter was born at Southrood, Kingston, the residence of his father, John Counter, Esq., on the 7th of May, 1841. His father was a prominent man in the history of Kingston, having been Mayor of the Limestone City for eight years. Charles Albert early evinced a taste for oratory, and even when a school boy was fond of discussing public questions. He frequently addressed the students of Queen's College from the rostrum, and was a prominent debater in the Alma Mater Society. Of late years Mr. Counter has acquired his principle notoriety as the champion of the female sex, his eloquent efforts on behalf of woman's rights entitling him to the gratitude of every lady in this country. Mr. Counter has also served his country in many ways. He has been engaged on several important public works—the Midland Railroad, the Credit Valley Railroad, the Toronto Grey and Bruce, the Grenville and Lachine Canals, the Canada Pacific and the Kingston and Pembroke Railways. Mr. Counter possesses a splendid delivery, enhanced by a good physique and powerful voice, and should be heard to be appreciated. As a political speaker Mr. Counter has few equals in Canada.

Mr. Counter's Celebrated Lecture on "Woman's Rights," delivered in the City Hall, Kingston, November 13th, 1877, before a large and intelligent audience :

On motion of Alderman McIntyre, Mr. J. H. Metcalfe, M.P.P., was called to the chair, and in a few brief remarks introduced Mr. Charles A. Counter, who has won for himself the proud title of Canada's Own Orator.

Mr. Counter, on coming forward, was received with loud cheers. He at once began as follows—addressing the chair: Sir—The question which I propose to discuss to-night is one of momentous import to every man, woman and child in this broad Dominion of ours, which reaches from the Atlantic on the east to the Pacific on the west. Nay, sir, this question is a cosmopolitan, not a local one, and concerns the whole world. The subject is "Woman's Rights." Now, sir, I maintain that whatever advances woman's interests furthers those of every mortal. They are "the morning stars of our youth, the day stars of our manhood, and the evening stars of old age. Having endowed these terrestrial angels with intellectual faculties why, sir, should they not possess their rights and privileges, monopolized by the selfish man. There is a tide in the affairs of man, which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune ; there is a tide in the affairs of woman, which taken at the flood, leads God knows where. In all sacred and profane history woman plays a prominent part. We find that in the creation this work was incomplete, and was not consummated until woman

was created to be a help-mate to man. After man came woman, and she has been after him ever since. (Cheers.) And mark, sir, from which part of the man she was created; not from his head, showing she was above; not from his feet, showing she was to be his slave, but from his middle, showing she was to be on an equality with him in all things. And what did the tyrant man do just after she was created. He induced the soft and yielding creature to eat of the apple with him, and then cowardly like turned round when accused and said "the woman forced him to eat," and this, sir, has been the course of man to woman ever since. Every mischief is said to have a woman in it, but this, sir, I have no hesitation in branding as a base calumny and falsehood. From the earliest ages woman has been held in bondage by the tyrant man. The ancient Greeks and Romans made them, not their helpmates, regarding them not as bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh, but as playthings and slaves, to be caressed or beaten at their sovereign wills. Yes, sir, even at this day, in this advanced nineteenth century, it is easy to judge of a nation's civilization by noticing the estimation in which women are held. Look at the different position of the sex in England and the United States on the one hand, and in Turkey and Utah and the Feejee Islands on the other.

In the sacred writings woman has a place of honor, for although it is distinctly laid down that woman is to have no dominion over man, and that man is head of the woman, even as Christ is head of the church, yet this is no bar to her having equal rights with man in the affairs of this life. Woman was the first to meet our Saviour at the Tomb. Woman has always been more devout and worshipping and of greater faith than man. Why, sir, how poorly would our churches at this day be filled if the women staid at home. I venture to say, sir, that in any church in this broad land you will find five female worshippers for one man, and this has always been the case. Reflect, sir, for a moment on the characters of Rebecca, Hannah, Ruth, Judith, Dorcas (the originator of the Sewing Society), and others too numerous to mention. Lot's wife, Ananias and Sophia we will say nothing about. With regard to the influence woman has exercised in the important events of history. Look at Cleopatra and Mark Antony, the Queen of Sheba and Queen Elizabeth, Madame Pompadour and

Louis XIV., Nell Gwynne and Charles II., Mrs. Gamp, Mrs. Harris, and others of Dicken's heroines.

In fact, sir, in whatever aspect we look at the question, we find that man would be a poor lonely creature without woman. We are assured by the highest authority that it is not good for man to be alone. "Oh, woman, lovely woman, we would have been brutes without you." In fact, sir, we would not have been here at all, for I ask every intelligent man in this audience "where he would have been to-night if he had never had a mother." (Loud cheers.)

Speaking of motherhood, is it not beautiful to witness the affection of a mother for her children? No matter who deserts them, a mother's love follows them always, even from the cradle to perhaps the gallows tree, and a mother will always try to screen the faults of her own offspring, and even fight for them as a tigress would for her cubs. In the training of the young 'tis woman who forms the plastic mind, who impresses on the young idea how to shoot, and trains them up to be useful citizens to the state. In the home the woman's hand reigns triumphant. Here her influence is most seen and felt, and you may be sure, sir, that a man who has a happy home has a woman to thank for it. When, oppressed by the cares of life and business, a man returns from his day's toil to his home, how pleasant it is to be received with smiles and a kiss of welcome from his loving wife, sisters and mother and their consins and their aunts. On the other hand, however, a man may be received with a broomstick if he stays out too late at night, so beware, take care and do not too far try the tempers of these sublunary angels—naughty, naughty, man.

The most important place, however, where woman's influence is most appreciated, is by the sick-bed of suffering humanity. Well has the poet expressed it:

"Oh, woman, in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy and hard to please,
And changing as the shade,
By the light quivering aspen made,
When pain and sickness assail the brow,
A ministering angel thou."

Who has not felt the devotion of woman when on the sick bed; her gentle hand performs those numberless offices, which

are repellant when performed by the rough, though kind hands of man. Who can smooth our pillows, moisten our lips, and tuck us in when we are children, like nature's own nurse—a woman? Who can make our food, our beef tea and egg nogg like a woman? Who can talk to us like a woman?

Look, sir, at the devotion of women to the sick. Let us recall to mind the glorious example in the Crimean war of Florence Nightingale and her little band of heroines. Look, sir, at that great and glorious sisterhood, the Sisters of Charity, who belong to that right honorable and influential body, the Roman Catholic party.

Who so ready when a man is prostrated by illness through intemperance, to help him to refrain from the intoxicating cup, to make him "swear off," as a woman.

With regard to their intellectual faculties I hold, sir, on good logical and justifiable grounds, that there is a certain class of intellectual women who possess as great minds as their fellow men, and if so, sir, why should they not have equal rights with men in this respect. Why should we not have female lawyers, female medical men and clergymen, and even female Cabinet Ministers. There are, I am happy to say, many barristers practising in the United States who are of the female persuasion, and very eloquent ones most of them are, women being naturally good talkers. Witness the case of Mrs. Alton H. Huglett of Chicago. As orators and lecturers we have brilliant examples in Mrs. Cady Stanton, Mrs. Susan B. Anthony, Mrs. Livermore and Mrs. Victoria Woodhull, who lectures on Free Love. We have now, also, many female medical men who are succeeding well in practice. Mrs. Jenny K. Trout, of Toronto, and many others.

I have no doubt the young men in my audience would not be as healthy, however, as they now are, and would often feign sickness, if they expected to be attended by some blooming young female graduate of the medical profession. Many would consider it a luxury to be an invalid with such fair attendants. As clergymen, look at Mrs. Van Cott, and other eloquent Methodist ministers. Conversions would, no doubt, be more numerous, and the churches better attended by larger congregations were we to have numerous female ministers. I see no reason whatever, sir, why women should not also

aspire to our legislative halls, and municipal offices. I regard it as a relic of the dark ages to debar from voting any woman who pays taxes as a man. The only danger that I see in admitting women to the franchise is that they would be likely to vote for the handsomest candidate. In that case, sir, even I might be induced to act as a representative man, notwithstanding my native modesty. There are several states in the neighbouring Republic where women have free access to the franchise, and this system is found to work very well. Even in this country women vote for school trustees, and if so, sir, why not extend the franchise and allow them to have a voice in all municipal and parliamentary elections.

There are many other departments of life besides the learned professions for which women have shown great aptitude. For example, women make good telegraph operators and first-class book-keepers and editors of papers. Some women have a great faculty for business, and experience has proved that it is much easier to cheat a man in a financial transaction than it is a woman. If you owe a debt to a man you may stave off payment for a long while very often, but if a woman is your creditor she will persistently dun you for her money until she gets it.

As school teachers women excel. The late Rev. Dr. Egerton Ryerson, late Superintendent of Education, admitted in one of his lectures "that no one could inculcate the rudiments of education to a child like a woman. As musicians and linguists they cannot be excelled. In literature they also shine.

Take for example the names of Charlotte Bronte, Miss Braddon, Mrs. Wood, Mrs. Oliphant and numerous other authors. In poetry we have Mrs. Hemans, Mrs. Yeomans, Mrs. Browning and Miss McColl and very many others.

With regard to the difference of their intellectual powers, men are more reflective, women more perceptive; men reason, women jump instinctively at a conclusion, which is generally correct. Women judge more by their feelings and passions, while men are more logical. Women, while more affectionate, are not so honest as men, nor so strictly honorable in small private affairs. A man's and a woman's faculties are somewhat different, but when a woman's perceptions and a man's reflections are combined, as in discussing matters by a husband and wife, almost perfection is reached.

This, as well as physical labour, is what is meant by a help-mate.

If you go to our fairs and exhibitions you see women's handiwork, a crown of honor to themselves, displayed everywhere. Women have great taste for the beautiful, but after all, sir, what object in the world can be compared to a beautiful woman herself, nature's greatest handiwork.

"Her prentice hand she tried on man,
And then she formed the lasses oh."

Poets have sung, during countless ages the charms of woman, and will do so while time endures. Beautiful women themselves are conscious of their beauty, and their plainer sisters always try to enhance their appearance by the aid of dress. This love of dress seems almost universal to the sex, and from the time when Eve first adorned herself with a fig leaf down to the crinolines and paniers of the present day the love of dress has always been shown. Go to the most barbarous tribe of Indian savages, and you will find the squaws decorated with their gaily painted blankets and using their looking-glass like their more highly civilized sisters of New York and Kingston.

Next, Mr. Chairman, we come to the great theme of love. What is love without a woman? It is like a nut without a kernel, a case without its jewel.

Men always have and always will love the dear creatures while the world exists

"Not always wisely, but too well."

What so beautiful as the love of a young man and woman:

"There's nothing half so sweet in life,
As love's young dream."

We are commanded to love one another, and this is easily done if the other is a lovely young lady. I cannot, however, sir, enter upon an analysis of love, for the subject overpowers me, and if I am still a bachelor I assure you, sir, it is not from want of love for the ladies. My opinion is that every man should be married. He is only half a man that is not, and the poorer half at that. The endurance of woman's love is a wonderful mystery; how often do we see it bestowed on unworthy objects, and yet their love still clings. As the coloured poet beautifully expresses it:

"Woman's love, like Ingy Rubber,
It stretch the more, the more you lub her."

And not like what the cynic says—

"Woman's love is like Scotch snuff,
You get one pinch and that's enough."

As examples, sir, of illustrious women, allow me to mention several of our British Queen's, the last and greatest of whom is our present sovereign lady, Queen Victoria. God bless her, long may she reign. In all the circumstances of wife and mother she has shown an example to the world. Frequently, sir, has she given advice to her ministers, which has proved to the future prosperity of that mighty and powerful nation the British Empire.

Among other noted women we may recall the names of Lady Jane Grey, Aspasia, Mrs. Billings, Ninon, Emily Soldene, Mrs. Langtry, the Jersey Lily, and Mrs. Lowry, and hundreds of others.

Women have played a prominent part also in the wars of the world. Recall to mind Boadicea, Helen of Troy, Joan of Arc and Jenny True Blue.

So far was the adoration of the female sex carried during the French revolution, that a woman was worshipped on the altars as the Goddess of Liberty.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I am sorry to say that while the love of a good woman elevates a man in every respect, the love of a bad one equally debases and destroys him, as witness the evidence of Solomon, who ought to know, being the wisest man. His great prototype, the late Brigham Young, who preached the pernicious doctrine of Polygamy has passed away, and with him I hope will soon fall that great blot on the civilization of the United States, Mormonism.

I, Mr. Chairman, am no advocate for Mormonism, the Oneida community, or Free Love, but for honest, legitimate love in all its connubial beauty and strength. Sir, in solving this momentous question I could go on for hours, but time will not permit, so I thank this large and intelligent audience for the attentive hearing they have accorded me. (Enthusiastic cheering.)

A vote of thanks was moved to the lecturer by Mr. Johnson, and seconded by Dr. Evans, and passed unanimously amid cheers.

